



# THE COMMERCIAL FLOORING REPORT

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## INSTALLATION WARRANTIES

Flooring installation failures are one of the biggest and most costly problems in the industry, regardless of the cause or who may be at fault. It's not uncommon for a commercial flooring failure to cost 10 times what the original installation did. A flooring installation failure always falls on the shoulders of the installer. This is a case of guilty until proven innocent and even if proven innocent the installers remain the guilty parties branded with a mark of mistrust. Most often an installation failure is based on a lack of understanding of the installation environment, product knowledge or lack of time to get the job done properly. And very often, by the time the flooring is installed, the project is behind schedule, the end user, architect and GC are pushing the flooring contractors and any compliance with industry standards for installing, whatever the flooring material is, may be totally ignored.

Amazing that the thought process at that time is "damn the torpedoes; full speed ahead" and then later, when it was a crapshoot that an inevitable failure may occur, the installers are blamed for doing a lousy job. Let us not forget that in a world of green consciousness the real green wasted, and what will be cried over most, is cash.

Furthermore take into consideration the workplace disruption, downtime, delays, business interruption, material disposal, loss of green initiatives and in general a big mess. Adding insult to injury is the occupant dissatisfaction and loss of faith and trust in the flooring contractor, installers and the flooring material itself.



Mismatched Pattern at Seam

While most commercial flooring contractors and installers say they'll guarantee their work, reality is, there's no way to know for sure, which means you could end up footing the bill for an installation problem. And, given the conditions under which commercial flooring is often installed and Fast Track projects, conditions may not exist to allow guaranteeing a successful floorcovering installation.

Even if you're using a supposedly experienced flooring contractor with seasoned installers, given what we've mentioned above, you're taking a big chance. And there's no guarantee every installer on the job is equally experienced. The fact that floor covering installation specs change more than any other specialty — a huge gamble may exist. Installation technology and flooring products are changing so fast that you can't expect the architect, GC, or installation firm to know it all. There is however a beacon of light that could shine for large commercial flooring installations.

### LIFE WITHOUT THE INSTALL WARRANTY ON LABOR

On June 12th, 2013 INSTALL, which stands for the International Standards and Training Alliance, announced at NeoCon that it would guarantee the work of its Certified Contractors. This is a move no one in the industry has ever taken as a group before. Yes, commercial flooring contractors may warrant their installation services on an individual basis but the INSTALL program involves labor and management, that is, the flooring contractor and flooring installer.

INSTALL unveiled their Warranty & Certified Contractor Program offering a groundbreaking Warranty on Labor for carpet, resilient and wood flooring installations.

The INSTALL Warranty on Labor is an added value provided by INSTALL Certified Contractors, and it's all guaranteed by the INSTALL Labor-Management Committee.

The certification process that fuels this Warranty is endorsed by virtually all floorcovering mills and manufacturers, coast-to-coast.

Only the best capitalized, most professional contractors in North America achieve the status of being an INSTALL Certified Contractor — and qualify to carry this Warranty on Labor. These are the contractors who are installing award-winning projects. INSTALL Certified Contractors deliver on the promises made by the Warranty on Labor with dependable, correct work. In addition to the flooring contractor's installation warranty, INSTALL Certified Contractors' installations are now covered by the INSTALL Warranty on Labor.

#### HOW IS THIS SO?

INSTALL regularly meets with flooring manufacturers and producers of adhesives, underlayment's and floor prep materials. Every few years, at the INSTALL training center in Las Vegas, the industry comes together to review new technology and installation guidelines for the express purpose of using that information to train member installers and nationwide trainers. This is done through a peer review of technical and education experts of INSTALL, partnering mills and manufacturers. The training is presented by the



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Carpenters International Training Fund, is ongoing and a career long process. No one else expends so much money or effort in this process. Manufacturer's investments in installation efforts pale by comparison. This training can insure that the products being offered in the marketplace can be installed as manufacturer's meant them to be, under the correct conditions and according to industry standards. This is how the installation guarantee can be offered.

To be an INSTALL Certified Contractor, employees must carry the INSTALL Certification, either in carpet, resilient or hardwood. To keep that certification valid, INSTALL floorcovering professionals must successfully complete career-long training to stay current on industry advancements.

The INSTALL Certification is the mark of a skilled flooring installation professional. The Certification Program creates a set of standards, so that installers with the skills, productivity and proper attitude to complete work quickly and correctly are easily identified throughout the United States and Canada.

### WHAT WAS SAID AT NEOCON?

"Our INSTALL Certified Contractors are the best in the business. INSTALL believes this so much that we will guarantee their installations!" This comment from INSTALL Director John McGrath helped to kick off the new INSTALL Warranty & Certified Contractor program.

Mohawk Industries' Michel Vermette, SVP of International & Commercial, and Leonard Zmijewski, (pronounced Zimjevski) president of Mr. David's International Flooring, joined McGrath and members of the INSTALL Labor-Management Committee to formally announce the program.



From the left – John McGrath, Michel Vermette, and Leonard Zmijewski

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Effective immediately, INSTALL guarantees the work of its Certified Contractors. The warranty covers commercial (and residential) installations of carpet, resilient and hardwood. Industries served include healthcare, education, hospitality, retail, residential, and many more.

“This Warranty is the first of its kind in the floorcovering industry. It is a third-party additional guarantee provided by the INSTALL Committee,” McGrath said. “Only the best capitalized, most professional contractors in North America achieve the status of being an INSTALL Certified Contractor - and therefore qualify to carry the Warranty on Labor.” Vermette contended that improperly installed floor coverings are one of the biggest complaints in construction. “The INSTALL Warranty on Labor combined with the Certified Contractor program will mitigate this major disruption for end users and the A&D community, Vermette said. “The best product in the world is only as good as its installation. Mohawk believes this warranty program will minimize disruptions for end users, increase performance of the project life cycle and create higher customer satisfaction.” Zmijewski said he views the warranty as a promise. “I already assure customers that flooring installed by my crews will not fail. Now, customers not only have my word, but also an additional, value-added warranty to back it up.” McGrath explained that the most important ingredient to becoming an INSTALL Certified Contractor is employing only mechanics who have current INSTALL Certifications. The INSTALL Certification was created to identify INSTALL’s most dependable and skilled installers.

Zmijewski called the Warranty program a “win-win” for INSTALL Certified Contractors and the end user, as well as being a benefit to the mills and manufacturers of the floorcovering industry.

Mohawk's Vermette said his company is focused on great project outcomes based on the needs and goals of the users for their space. “As the world’s largest flooring manufacturer, our products and brands span every major flooring category across a wide range of price points and



The new **Velcro Brand Carpet Protector** is ready to go. This product takes the place of clear plastic coverings with pressure sensitive adhesive that have created a host of problems for the industry. The new **Velcro Brand Carpet Protector** is made for use on loop and cut and loop carpet; the vast majority of commercial carpet. Bentley Prince Street is the first carpet manufacturer to offer this unique product. Contact Velcro for more information and samples.



Systems like EnviroSTIX for hard surface and hard backed flooring materials and Bentley Prince Street Contact Release for carpet are systems that will help prevent the failure of flooring installations. There is more technology coming, most of which we are involved with. We'll keep you informed to help you. In the meantime understand that moisture, temperature and humidity have a profound effect on flooring materials and the integrity of their installation.

distribution channels. We have a deep appreciation for the importance of quality installations and project management to the success of great projects,” Vermette said. “We applaud the INSTALL program and its leadership for having the diligence to develop a standardized curriculum for its thousands of installers, a certification process to test and then reward exceptional skills, and now this certified contractor and warranty program,” Vermette added.

Zmijewski said his company depends on its installation crews to complete installations correctly and according to specifications. “I trust my crews because they are INSTALL certified, and to me, that is the mark of skilled flooring professional,” Zmijewski said. “I know I can deliver on promises made by the warranty because my installation crews produce dependable, correct work, all the time. Because of the confidence I have in the talent of our crews, I am able to bid on more projects and I expect that offering the INSTALL Warranty on Labor will help my company win more work.” “We believe the information released today should alter the way architects, interior designers, building owners, and facility managers approach the flooring portion of their next project. We believe the Warranty & Certified Contractor Program presents a no-hassle solution for their floor covering projects,” McGrath said.

For more information, contact John McGrath, INSTALL Director, at 215-582-4108 or [INSTALL@carpenters.org](mailto:INSTALL@carpenters.org). Also, visit the INSTALL web site at [www.installfloors.org](http://www.installfloors.org). To reach the warranty section or find a directory of INSTALL Certified Contractors in a geographic region, go to [www.installfloors.org/warranty](http://www.installfloors.org/warranty).

### **THERE’S MORE:**

Warranting flooring installation is one thing but when the cause of the failure is related to site conditions of any kind or compromising substrate conditions that could not be foreseen or were not revealed, then the flooring installation failure takes a different turn. Even if there is a warranty on the installation by whoever installs the material, replacing or repairing the failed flooring without alleviating the cause won’t accomplish anything. So keep in mind that the flooring will manifest a physical condition that can be interpreted as a failure of the material or installation integrity that may not be either of those. It may take more focused attention to determine what the exact cause is but rest assured, when that cause is determined there is always a way to fix the problem; always. LGM can help with that; it’s what we do on a daily basis. Our offices and testing lab are in the heart of the floor covering industry. We know what’s going on in the industry at all times. When the finger pointing begins we can point it in the exact spot of the cause and then direct a fix for the failure after which the installation can be guaranteed again.



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**“WHEN NO ONE ELSE HAS ANSWERS, WE DO”**